

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN THE SELFISH GIANT BY OSCAR WILDE: A TRANSITIVITY ANALYSIS

**Alifya Shaumi Adib Muhammad**

English Studies Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Padjadjaran  
Jl. Raya Bandung Sumedang KM 21, Hegarmanah, Sumedang, Jawa Barat 45363  
E-mail: alifya23002@mail.unpad.ac.id

**ABSTRACT.** Character development in children's literature is frequently manifested through moral crises that demand shifts in a character's internal perspective. This study aims to analyze the evolution of the Giant's transitivity patterns in Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* to reveal his moral transformation. Applying Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics, the research examines process types, participants, and circumstances across two narrative stages. The results reveal a significant shift from dominant material processes representing physical control and isolation to an increase in mental and relational processes. This shift signifies a transition in the character's mental state from selfish stagnation and moral unconsciousness to empathetic awareness and social connectedness. Furthermore, dominant spatial circumstances illustrate the narrative's movement from isolation to renewal, proving that linguistic choices systematically construct character development and reinforce the story's central themes.

**Keywords:** transitivity; systemic functional linguistics; character development; moral transformation; children's literature

**ABSTRAK.** Perkembangan karakter dalam sastra anak sering kali dimanifestasikan melalui krisis moral yang menuntut perubahan perspektif internal tokoh. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perkembangan pola transitivitas tokoh Giant dalam *The Selfish Giant* karya Oscar Wilde guna mengungkap transformasi moralnya. Dengan menggunakan kerangka Linguistik Sistemik-Fungsional dari Halliday, penelitian ini membedah elemen proses, partisipan, dan keterangan pada dua tahap narasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pergeseran signifikan dari dominasi proses material yang merepresentasikan kontrol fisik dan isolasi, menuju peningkatan proses mental dan relasional. Perubahan ini menandakan transisi kondisi batin tokoh dari stagnasi egois dan ketidaksadaran moral menuju kesadaran empatik dan keterhubungan sosial. Selain itu, dominasi keterangan spasial mencerminkan pergerakan tema dari isolasi menuju keterbukaan, membuktikan bahwa pilihan kebahasaan secara sistematis membangun perkembangan karakter dan memperkuat tema narasi.

**Kata kunci:** transitivitas; perkembangan karakter; karya sastra anak; linguistik sistemik-fungsional

### INTRODUCTION

Children's literature holds many moments of crisis, where characters make moral choices and reflect on the reasons behind those choices (Norton et al., 2003). These stories offer young readers opportunities to critically evaluate events and explore the world through the lens of their moral reasoning, which helps encourage reading and engagement (Syakira & Hissan, 2012, p. 85). This highlights the importance of character development in children's stories, as they often learn by observing and imitating the emotional and moral growth of characters or figures they encounter. Exploring these issues through the perspective of story characters can offer engaging and meaningful learning opportunities in moral thinking and behavior (Brouillette, 2009, p. 19). Such moral transformation in children's literature not only makes stories more engaging but also allows readers to connect with the characters' journeys, making moral lessons more impactful.

In this context, transitivity analysis becomes a useful tool for exploring character development. By examining linguistic choices such as shifts in verb processes and circumstantial elements, we can trace how a character's actions and behaviors evolve. Specifically, this involves analyzing how the protagonist moves from being an actor in material processes to becoming a senser in mental processes, which signals a burgeoning internal consciousness and moral reflection. Furthermore, circumstantial elements serve to anchor these processes in a shifting narrative reality; a transition from circumstances of manner that denote aggression to circumstances of place that denote shared space provides a formal grammatical map of the character's journey from isolation to empathy. Thus, transitivity analysis reveals that character growth is not merely a thematic occurrence but is systematically constructed through the very clause-level grammar that reinforces the story's central themes.

According to Koc & Buzzelli, p. (2004, p. 92), children's literature is a useful tool for moral education, centering around concepts of fairness,

human welfare, and human rights. Children's literature maintains and transmits these values, conveying messages about right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, what is achievable and what is forbidden, reflecting the ideals and principles of society (McCabe et al., 2011, p. 199). Through the construction of characters and engaging storytelling, these narratives provide abstract moral concepts such as love, kindness, and empathy. As Wright, p. (1995, p. 3) notes, these stories are essential for children's lives as they help them understand their surroundings and share it with others. The linguistic simplicity of children's literature also allows for a clearer examination of how language constructs ideational meaning. According to Hancock (2008), children's literature refers to works that resonate with children's interests, needs, and reading preferences, capturing their attention as the main audience. This means that the way this type of literature is served should highlight its distinctiveness, especially when it comes to aspects of style, content, theme, and characters.

Since its publication in 1888 as part of *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* has been the subject of extensive scholarly examination. It is a story about a giant who banishes children from his garden, causing it to remain in a perpetual winter. He eventually comes to understand the consequences of his actions and opens his heart after reconciling with the children, especially a little boy who plays a central role in his transformation. Besides the simplicity of its language, as a children's short story, it presents a transformation from selfishness to compassion. As noted by Widiyanti (2021), Wilde's fairy tales, including these earlier research are not particularly relevant to the argument in the previous paragraph, which states that transitivity analysis (verb processes and circumstantial factors) can be used to investigate character development in stories. Please incorporate more relevant previous studies. *The Selfish Giant*, convey deep moral lessons that transcend age. Its universal themes of kindness make it a valuable case study in understanding how character development in children's literature conveys moral lessons through language. The story symbolizes isolation and self-reflection (Widiyanti, 2021). According to Halliday (1994), transitivity analysis helps us understand "how language encodes experience." In this case, it helps us to make sense of what goes on around the character and inside the character, which can reveal the Giant's changing moral stance through shifts in verb processes.

Transitivity analysis has been widely applied in literary studies to examine how linguistic choices

construct character development and convey deeper meanings within narratives. A study by Shahzadi et al. (2022) examined identity change in *Bingo* within the context of the Dhaka Fall, exploring how external conflict influences internal development. Ahmad (2019) applied transitivity analysis to Oscar Wilde's short story *The Happy Prince*, showing how the protagonist's linguistic choices help interpret the character's construction. Mehmood et al. (2014) analyzed Oscar Wilde's *The Nightingale and the Rose* using transitivity to explore how Wilde presents two contrasting views of love. Faizin et al. (2022) analyzed transitivity in Joseph Jacobs's fairy tales, highlighting distinct linguistic patterns in children's literature that shape the character's actions. Hussain et al. (2023) focused on character development in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, showing how changes in transitivity patterns reflect shifts in identity and ideological stance.

While previous studies have examined character transformation through transitivity analysis, there is limited research specifically focusing on how these analyses reflect moral transformation in character development within children's short stories. To address this gap, this study analyses the participants, processes, and circumstances associated with the main character in *The Selfish Giant*. Accordingly, this study investigates (1) how the transitivity patterns in *The Selfish Giant* evolve throughout the narrative in relation to the Giant's shifting moral stance, and (2) how these patterns contribute to the development of the story's central themes.

Hussain et al. (2023) used transitivity to trace identity transformation in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, illustrating how linguistic patterns reflect psychological shifts. Salayo & Lontoc-Macam (2019) study on *A Retrieved Reformation* showed how process type variation reflects moral and behavioral transformation. Moreover, Shahzadi et al. (2022) examined identity change in *Bingo* within the context of the Dhaka Fall, exploring how external conflict influences internal development. Faizin et al. (2022) investigated recurring process types in fairy tales, providing insights on how character roles and actions are constructed within narrative. Lastly, Nguyen (2012) analysis of *Heroic Mother* emphasized the emotional and moral aspects of character growth through mental and relational processes. These studies together provided a comprehensive and relevant framework for analyzing how transitivity patterns reveal the protagonist's moral evolution in narrative.

This study aims to examine how transitivity patterns in *The Selfish Giant* evolve throughout

the narrative, particularly in relation to the Giant's changing moral stance. It focuses on the use of participants, processes, and circumstances to explore how the Giant's actions, thoughts, and experiences are conveyed through language. By identifying and analyzing the verb processes associated with the Giant, the study investigates how shifts in process types and circumstantial elements reflect the Giant's moral transformation by treating these linguistic choices as the grammatical realization of his evolving consciousness. Specifically, the transition from material processes (physical dominance) to mental and relational processes (internal reflection and empathy) demonstrates a fundamental change in how the character 'makes sense' of his world.

## METHOD

The primary data for this study consists of the short story *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde, retrieved from the official MORE! CIIP Website (<https://moreciip.cambridge.org>). The text was manually parsed into 198 clauses. This study employs a purposive sampling of clauses where the Giant is the primary participant, allowing for a concentrated analysis of his character trajectory.

This study is grounded in the Transitivity system of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), specifically the model proposed by Halliday & Matthiessen (2004). According to Halliday & Matthiessen, p. (2004, p. 170) the transitivity system reflects "how language represents the world of experience." The six process types: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential, construct distinct kinds of experience: doing, sensing, being, saying, behaving, and existing. Halliday & Matthiessen, pp. (2004, pp. 175–176) also explain that a "figure" (a unit of experiential meaning in clause grammar) consists of three components: a process unfolding through time, the participants involved in that process, and the circumstances surrounding it, with the process being the central element.

The findings were organized into three categorized tables: (1) overall process types, (2) processes specifically associated with the Giant, (3) circumstantial elements. Each of the first two tables presented the process types along with their frequencies and percentages. Meanwhile, the circumstantial element table focused on the different types of circumstances found in the narrative. In the discussion, these tables were analyzed to explore the evolving transitivity patterns and how they reflect the Giant's moral development throughout the story. Additionally, the circumstantial elements were

examined for their contribution to the overall theme of the narrative. By combining structured presentation with theoretical interpretation, the analysis provides both clarity and depth in understanding character development in *The Selfish Giant*.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Transitivity Reflections of the Giant's Transformation

To provide a rigorous comparative analysis of the Giant's character development, the narrative was bifurcated into two distinct stages based on the protagonist's moral trajectory.

#### Stage 1: The State of Exclusion

This section covers the Giant's return from his seven-year visit to the Ogre, his act of building the wall, and the subsequent perpetual winter in his garden. Linguistically, this stage is characterized by high transitive agency where the Giant acts as a barrier to the external world.

#### Stage 2: The State of Redemption

The 'After' stage is demarcated by the pivotal realization event in ("*I cannot understand why the Spring is so late in coming*") leading to the sight of the children in the trees). The definitive boundary is set at the point of the Giant's internal monologue: "*How selfish I have been!*" From this point forward, the analysis tracks the shift in his transitivity patterns as he actively seeks to dismantle the physical and symbolic walls he previously constructed.

By establishing this clear boundary, the statistical shift in process types (e.g., the decrease in material 'building' processes and the increase in mental 'sensing' processes) can be directly correlated to the character's psychological epiphany.

**Table 1. Transitivity process in short story 'The Selfish Giant'**

Process	Part 1		Part 2	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Material	32	43.24%	41	33.06%
Relational	17	22.97%	32	25.81%
Mental	7	9.46%	25	20.16%
Verbal	8	10.81%	15	12.10%
Behavioral	4	5.41%	8	6.45%
Existential	6	8.11%	3	2.42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>		<b>124</b>	

Table 1 illustrates the overall distribution of transitivity processes throughout the story, divided into Part 1 and Part 2. In Part 1, the most frequent

process type is the material process (32 occurrences, 43.24%), followed by relational (17 occurrences, 22.97%) and verbal (8 occurrences, 10.81%). Other process types such as mental, behavioral, and existential appear less frequently. In contrast, Part 2 shows an increase in relational (32 occurrences, 25.81%) and mental processes (25 occurrences, 20.16%), while material processes (41 occurrences, 33.06%) still remain dominant but comparatively less dominant than in Part 1. Additionally, verbal processes also increase slightly to 12.10%.

This distribution indicates an initial shift in the experiential content of the story. As Halliday & Matthiessen, p. (2004, p. 179) note, material processes are those that represent a change in the flow of events through the input of energy, essentially modeling actions or happenings that impact the physical world. In Part 1, the dominance of material processes reflects a strong emphasis on action and physical control, conveying the Giant's selfishness and disconnection from others. His world is defined by doing, constructing, and enforcing that emphasizes dominance and exclusion rather than emotional or interpersonal engagement.

By comparison, Part 2 demonstrates an increase in mental and relational processes. While material clauses are concerned with our experience of the material world, mental clauses are concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness such as the world of perception, thought, and feeling (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 179). This suggests a narrative shift inward, toward reflection, perception, and emotional awareness. Relational processes, on the other hand, are "used to characterize and to identify" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 210). These processes often reflect changes in relationships and self-understanding. The increased presence of relational and mental processes in Part 2 reflects a transformation in how experience is constructed: from a focus on doing to a focus on being, thinking, and connecting.

At this stage, we can observe that the narrative's transitivity pattern shifts from being primarily action-driven to becoming more reflective and relational. This transition reflects the narrative's themes of selfishness and moral growth that becomes central in the story. Importantly, while these shifts are significant, a detailed examination of how these processes are specifically associated with the Giant is necessary before drawing final conclusions about his character development. This will be addressed in the analysis of Table 2.

To investigate the transitivity patterns specifically linked to the Giant, Table 2 presents all

the processes in which the Giant is directly involved as the participant. The table shows contrast between Part 1 and Part 2 of the narrative. In Part 1, the dominant process type is material (40%), indicating a strong focus on physical action and external control. In contrast, in Part 2, while material processes remain significant (25.76%), mental processes rise significantly to 30.30%, becoming the most frequent type. relational processes also increase from 20% to 27.27%, and verbal processes maintain a steady presence (15%). behavioral processes decrease sharply from 10% to 1.52% in Part 2.

**Table 2. All transitivity process related to the Giant**

Process	Part 1		Part 2	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Material	8	40%	17	25.76%
Relational	4	20%	18	27.27%
Mental	3	15%	20	30.30%
Verbal	3	15%	10	15.15%
Behavioral	2	10%	1	1.52%
<b>Total</b>	20/198 (27.03%)		66/198 (53.23%)	

In Part 1, the Giant is associated with only 20 processes (27.03% of all processes in that part), while in Part 2, he is linked to 66 processes (53.23% of the total), indicating a significant increase in his depiction as a participant. In Part 1, material processes dominate the Giant's activity (8 occurrences, 40%), showing that his primary form of interaction with the world is through physical actions. In this context, the Giant is predominantly the Actor executing actions of exclusion and control as it is quite apparent in the following examples from the text:

(1) He builds a high wall all round it

**Example 1.1**

Actor	Material Process	Goal	Circumstances
He	builds	a high wall	all round it

and puts up a noticeboard

**Example 1.2**

Actor	Material Process	Goal
(He)	puts up	a noticeboard

The actions of the Giant building a wall and putting a noticeboard to exclude children, are concrete actions that demonstrate his detachment from other participants. These clauses embody what Halliday & Matthiessen, p. (2004, p. 183) terms "action clauses" that "foreground agency and intention", marking

the Giant as an intentional figure. The frequency of these material processes (40%) in Part 1 therefore demonstrates his authoritarian and possessive stance. He asserts dominance not only over space (his garden) but also over the children, who are excluded from their pleasures. His moral compass at this stage is self-centered, emphasizing his characterization as “selfish.”

On the other hand, the presence of **relational processes** (20%) in Part 1 suggests a focus on identity and attribution. These include clauses in the following examples:

(1) He is a very selfish giant

#### Example 2.1

Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute
He	is	a very selfish giant

My own garden is my own garden

#### Example 2.2

Token	Relational Process	Value
My own garden	is	my own garden

These clauses emphasize possessiveness and entitlement. Halliday & Matthiessen, (2004, p. 213) describe relational clauses as those that serve to “characterize or identify participants” which in this case reflects the Giant’s view that possession grants authority and control.

Furthermore, mental and verbal processes are less frequent in Part 1, each has only 15% of the total. This limited cognitive and verbal engagement reflects the Giant’s underdeveloped moral and lack of meaningful interaction or willingness to communicate. These mental and verbal processes, where present, serve to reinforce his moral stagnation as is evident in these following samples:

(1) I don’t understand why spring is late this year

#### Example 3.1

Senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon
I	(don’t) understand	why spring is late this year

“What are you doing here?” he shouts in a very angry voice

#### Example 3.2

Sayer	Verbal Process	Verbiage	Circumstances
He	shouts	‘What are you doing here?’	in a very angry voice

The first clause reveals that the Giant has not yet made the connection between his selfish actions and the unnatural absence of spring in his garden. This suggests a lack of cognitive engagement with the consequences of his behavior, indicating that he is still disconnected from the moral implications of his choices. The use of a mental process of cognition “understand” highlights his inner confusion, yet also subtly signals the beginning of a shift when he is beginning to question, even if he has not fully realized the cause. In the second clause, the use of the verbal process “shouts” reflects the Giant’s authoritative and aggressive stance toward the children. Unlike a neutral verb like “says,” “shouts” conveys intensity and force, suggesting that the Giant is not simply speaking, but exerting power and control through language. This choice of process aligns with his dominant, territorial behavior, emphasizing his characterization as the Selfish Giant.

Moreover, behavioral processes, which Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, p. 141) describe as physiological or psychological behaviors that lie between action and experience make up 10% of Part 1 and tend to be emotionally muted in nature. These processes reflect instinctive reactions rather than acts of deliberate moral agency, further portraying the Giant as emotionally withdrawn. When they do appear, they indicate that he is engaged in behavior without full intentionality, unlike material processes. His actions are often limited to his own space, rather than involving or connecting with other participants, as shown in the following examples:

(1) He is sitting at the window

#### Example 4.1

Behavior	Behavioral Process	Circumstances
He	(is) sitting	at the window’

and looking out at his cold white garden

#### Example 4.2

Behavior	Behavioral Process	Phenomenon
He	looking out	at his cold white garden

These actions in the clauses reflect a state of passive observation, rather than intentional doing or emotional expression. In line with Halliday & Matthiessen’s (2004) description of behavioral processes as bordering action and experience, this example highlights how the Giant is physically present but emotionally and socially disengaged.

In contrast, Part 2 of the narrative demonstrates

a transformation in the Giant, reflected in the shift in transitivity patterns. Significantly, mental processes increase highly to 30.30%, making them the most dominant among all process types. These now exceed material processes, indicating a transformation from external action to internal reflection. The rise in mental processes highlights the Giant's moral awakening as well as his growing capacity for empathy and moral growth. Unlike in Part 1, the Giant begins to perceive the world through the lens of compassion, not possession. His moral development is reflected linguistically through these processes of sensing and feeling, as shown in these examples:

(1) He still thinks of his little friend

#### Example 5.1

Senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon
He	thinks of	his little friend

and he feels sad

#### Example 5.2

Senser	Mental Process	Phenomenon
he	feels	sad

The two clauses show both cognitive and emotional engagement where he is remembering the little boy and feeling sad because of it, suggesting a deep internal transformation. This pattern is consistent with Hussain et al. (2023) findings on identity shifts in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, where a character's development is reflected by a rise in mental processes over time.

Furthermore, relational processes also increase in Part 2 to 27.27%. Salayo & Lontoc-Macam (2019) similarly found that shifts from material to mental and relational processes in *A Retrieved Reformation* corresponded with moral and behavioral changes in the protagonist. While these clauses continue to characterize states of being and identity, in this case, they now reflect a shift in the Giant's self-perception. Where he was previously associated with attributions such as "selfish" (as shown in Example 2.1), relational processes now play a key role in establishing moral and emotional transformation. They reflect the reconstitution of the Giant's identity, marking his development from selfish to selfless, as demonstrated in the following examples:

(1) My garden is the children's playground now.

#### Example 6.1

Token	Relational Process	Value
My garden	is	the children's playground now

My garden is the children's playground now

The Giant is kind to all the children

#### Example 6.2

Carrier	Relational Process	Attribute
The giant	is	kind to all the children

In the first clause, the Giant's garden, once a symbol of his isolation and control, is now redefined as belonging to and serving the children. The clause expresses identification, not just a physical change, but also a shift in values from possession and exclusion to sharing and inclusion. The use of a relational process here emphasizes that this change is definitional, that the Giant no longer sees the garden as his, but as theirs. The second clause expresses a relational process of attribution, assigning the positive moral attribute of kindness to the Giant. The inclusion of "to all the children" makes the attribute relationally directed, highlighting that his transformation now involves care for others. He is no longer isolated, instead, he is portrayed as emotionally and socially connected. This presents a clear contrast to earlier attributions such as "selfish" and constructs his new identity as a caring, reformed figure, which aligns with Nguyen (2012) findings in *Heroic Mother* where such processes highlight the moral aspects of character evolution.

On the other hand, **material processes**, though still dominant (25.76%), now reflect positive, generous actions. The Giant acts not to exclude but to include the children. The Actor's role is still his, but the Goal of his actions is no longer territorial control but emotional connection. This illustrates what Halliday & Matthiessen (2004, p. 186) calls "benefactive material action," where the Actor's agency benefits others. The examples below further illustrate this:

(1) The Giant walks over to him

#### Example 7.1

Actor	Material Process	Goal
The giant	walks over	to him
and takes him gently in his arms		

#### Example 7.2

Actor	Material Process	Goal	Circumstances
(the giant)	takes	him	gently, in his arms

These examples contain two material

processes: “walks over” and “takes.” Both are deliberate physical actions that highlight the Giant’s shift from passivity to meaningful engagement. By first initiating movement toward the boy and then physically taking him, the Giant is portrayed as actively reaching out and forming a connection. These processes reflect a growing sense of care towards the children, particularly the little boy. This finding supports Shahzadi et al. (2022) conclusion that changes in identity can be reflected through language, especially when shaped by meaningful external or symbolic experiences such as the presence of the children and the little boy, who serve as sources of moral influence.

Interestingly, **verbal processes** also slightly increased (15.15%) from Part 1 (15%). Beside reflecting the Giant’s relationship with other participants, this shift also shows changes in their function. According to Halliday & Matthiessen, p. (2004, p. 252), verbal clauses reflect interpersonal engagement, a key of social morality. The following example illustrates this:

(1) “Who hurt you?” shouts the Giant

**Example 8.1**

<b>Sayer</b>	<b>Verbal Process</b>	<b>Verbiage</b>
the Giant	shouts	“Who hurt you?”

**2. Circumstantial Elements and Thematic Realization**

While process types reveal how characters behave, experience, and develop, circumstantial elements offer essential contextual information such as when, where, why, and in what manner actions take place. As Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) note, circumstances add depth to narrative structure, placing processes within specific spatiotemporal and motivational frameworks. The circumstantial elements observed in the text largely fall under **extent** (frequency, duration, distance), **location** (place, time), **manner** (means, quality), and **cause** (reason, purpose), **comparison**, and **matter**, which collectively contribute to placing actions within particular settings of time, space, and purpose. To further examine how the transitivity system contributes to the overall theme of the narrative, particularly selflessness and transformation, Table 3 presents the distribution of circumstance types across both parts.

**Table 3. Circumstances in short story ‘The Selfish Giant’**

	Part 1	Part 2
Circumstances	Frequency	Frequency
Frequency	3	2

Duration	3	1
Distance	1	0
Place	25	37
Time	10	7
Means	2	3
Quality	3	1
Comparison	2	0
Reason	0	1
Purpose	3	0
Matter	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>52</b>

Overall, the number of circumstantial clauses remains relatively balanced (53 in Part 1, 52 in Part 2), but the distribution reveals thematic shifts. In both parts, the circumstance of **place** dominates (25 in Part 1, 37 in Part 2), followed by **time** (10 and 7 respectively). Below are some samples from the text: (1) In the garden of the selfish Giant it’s still winter.

**Example 9.1**

<b>Token</b>	<b>Relational Process</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Circumstances</b>
It	is	winter	in the garden of the selfish Giant

the little boy puts his arms around the Giant’s neck

**Example 9.2**

<b>Actor</b>	<b>Material Process</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Circumstances</b>
The little boy	puts	his arms	around the Giant’s neck

The frequent use of place-related circumstances helps show how the garden reflects deeper changes in the story. In Part 1, as in Example 8.1, the garden is shown as a cold and private space, symbolizing the Giant’s selfishness and isolation. By Part 2, the use of circumstances becomes more personal as in Example 8.2 where closeness suggests warmth and connection. This change in how space is described supports the idea that the garden has shifted from a place of exclusion to one of care and love.

Moreover, although **purpose** and **reason** circumstances appear only occasionally in Part 2, they play a key role in reflecting a shift in the story’s values. For example:

(2) The trees are happy to have the children back

**Example 10.1**

<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Circumstances</b>
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The trees are happy to have the children back (purpose)

This circumstantial element conveys emotional fulfillment tied to reconnection. This element indicates a movement away from the emotional emptiness presented in Part 1, where such circumstances are absent. Instead, the narrative in Part 2 begins to center on care. In this way, actions are no longer portrayed as isolated events but as meaningful expressions of shared joy and intentional togetherness.

In contrast, **comparison** and **quality** circumstances are more dominant in Part 1. **Comparison** circumstances contribute to the depiction of the garden's emotional and physical detachment, as shown in the following example:

(1) and his breath is like ice.

#### Example 11.1

##### Carrier Process Attribute Circumstances

his	is	ice	like ice
breath			(comparison)

he shouts in a very angry voice.

#### Example 11.2

##### Sayer Process Circumstances

he	shouts	in a very angry voice
		(quality)

By comparing the character's breath to ice, the narrative aligns the environmental coldness with a sense of isolation. This comparison highlights the ongoing presence of winter as a consequence for the Giant's selfishness, showing that the garden remains untouched by warmth. The use of comparison here functions ideationally to reflect the frozen state of the garden and symbolically mirrors the Giant's inner coldness and detachment from others. On the other hand, Example 10.2 functions as a circumstance of **quality** which describes the tone accompanying the verbal process. It adds interpersonal depth to the clause, highlighting not just that the Giant speaks, but how he does so. This mannered expression of anger emphasizes his aggressive authority in the first part of the story. It signals a lack of empathy and a desire to dominate, aligning with his initial characterization as selfish and unwelcoming. Thus, the circumstance helps shape both the mood of the scene and contribute to the narrative's theme.

Overall, the use of circumstances in both parts shows how different patterns of the transitivity system work together to support the story's theme. Part 1 shows the Giant as distant,

alone, and selfish while Part 2 reveals increasing connection, involvement, and moral growth. These circumstances do more than merely expand the processes, they reveal evolving values and shifts in the Giant's point of view that contributes to the theme of the narrative.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the character development of the Giant in Oscar Wilde's *The Selfish Giant* through transitivity, a central concept in Systemic Functional Linguistics. Drawing on Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) model, the analysis demonstrates that shifts in process types and circumstantial elements play a key role in reflecting the Giant's transformation and reinforcing the story's central theme. By analyzing process types (material, behavioral, mental, relational, verbal, and existential), participant roles, and circumstantial elements across two narrative stages, the study reveals how language shapes both the internal transformation of the Giant and the story's moral theme.

The findings demonstrate a clear shift in the types of processes used throughout the narrative. In Part 1, the material processes are the most frequent (43.24%), reflecting a world characterized by physical control and exclusion, which aligns with the Giant's initial role as an isolated and selfish figure. Relational and verbal processes appear less frequently, while mental and behavioral processes are minimal. This distribution highlights a character focused more on action than thought or interaction. Table 2 further supports this, showing that only 27.03% of Part 1's clauses involve the Giant, most of them emphasizing material action (40%), with limited engagement in reflective or relational functions. In Part 2, material processes remain common (33.06%) but are less dominant than in Part 1. At the same time, mental processes (20.16%) and relational processes (25.81%) become more frequent. He becomes the active participant in over half of the clauses (53.23%), with mental processes increasing to 30.30% and relational to 27.27%. These changes reflect a transformation in his character from someone driven by action and control to someone more thoughtful, caring, and emotionally aware. Verbal processes also increase, showing that he is becoming more open and willing to engage with others.

Circumstantial elements, examined in Table 3, contribute to the central theme. Although the number of circumstantial clauses remain balanced between the two parts (53 and 52), their distribution shifts meaningfully. Place is the most dominant

circumstance in both parts but increases from 25 to 37 in Part 2. These spatial circumstances, often tied to the garden's transformation, show the story's shift from isolation to renewal, mirroring the Giant's inner change. Circumstances of time, though fewer, help to mark this progression, especially through seasonal transitions.

Together, these patterns show how the grammar of the text reflects deeper narrative shifts. As the Giant becomes more emotionally and socially aware, the transitivity pattern surrounding him shifts to reflect that change. The study highlights how transitivity offers an insightful way to trace such developments, even in a short and simply written story such as children's literature. By examining how different types of processes and circumstances are distributed, the analysis demonstrated that the story conveys meaning, such as moral changes, not only in content but also in clause-level grammar. This suggests that transitivity approaches can significantly enhance our understanding of how character development is realized in narrative texts, offering potential for further exploration in the analysis of other literary works.

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